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being rather more abundant in the latter part of the Commentary. To some extent one appears to get a glance behind the veil that hid the labours of the Old Testament Revisers from the public gaze. Shall I be very wrong in attributing to Prof. Driver some of the best of the new translations which distinguish the R. V. from the A. V. of Samuel? Not that he always agrees with the later version; see *e.g.* on 2 Sam. v. 8, while on page 145 he makes the very just observation—so just that I wish it could be pressed home on those readers who confine themselves to the English translation solely—that “A. V. (and occasionally even R. V.) sometimes conceals a difficulty by giving a sense that is agreeable with the context, regardless of the fact that the Hebrew words used do not actually express it; *i.e.*, they implicitly adopt an emendation of the text.” This remark expresses far more clearly than I have done above what I meant to say of the Jewish commentators. I do not remember missing a note on a single difficulty in the whole of Prof. Driver's book except perhaps in I. Sam. ch. xxviii. 11, 12, where the context seems to me to need some justification. I must conclude this very inadequate notice by expressing the hope that the Clarendon Press will regard Prof. Driver's book merely as the first of a series. It would be a great service to students of Hebrew if all the historical books were dealt with by Prof. Driver himself with the same brilliant scholarship, sound judgment, subtle power of grammatical analysis and terse lucidity, as he has so markedly displayed in his edition of Samuel.

I. ABRAHAMS.

THE RABBIS OF LEMBERG.

Klilath Jofi, enthaltend die Geschichte der Rabbiner der Stadt Lemberg.
By C. N. DEMBITZER. (Cracow, 1888.)

THE history of the Jews in Poland is still in a very unsatisfactory state. All that reaches us through the medium of general histories is just enough to excite our curiosity, but too insignificant to gratify our desire for closer knowledge. We hear, for instance, that the Jews in Poland from time to time were wont to hold great synods; but we know little about their procedure and transactions. We read, also, that the whole of Poland was divided into four Provinces (ארבע ארצות), the Chief Rabbis of which exercised jurisdiction over all the Jews in the kingdom, but even after the contributions of Harkavy, Perles and Gurland, there is still much that is obscure in the life and labours of the Chief Rabbis, who, as their position would suggest, must have been great both in learning and in piety. We possess descriptions of the great persecution by Chmelniezky, in which the Polish Jews suffered as much as their brethren in other parts of Europe in the age of the Crusades, but we are told very little about the lives of these sufferers. Were those thousands of Jews who were murdered by the hands of the Cossacks, but who could have saved their lives and fortunes by joining the religion of the conquerors; or those 300 martyrs of Polonnoie, who, guided by their Rabbi and dressed in their shrouds, patiently awaited the supreme moment when they would be able to sanctify the name of God; or that

girl of Nemirov who, when passing a bridge on her way to the church, to be there wedded to one of the Cossack leaders, plunged down into the river and disappeared for ever—were those Jews really “not of a very high class”; were they, in truth, not “of the heroic stuff to rise superior to the terrible circumstances”? With what splendid colours would this national tragedy have been pictured, if the scene had been laid in Spain, or any other country in the South or the West of Europe. But there is very little sympathy displayed when the actors are Polish Jews.

Still, this unsympathetic treatment of our Polish co-religionists is by no means to be ascribed to any personal animosity from the side of Jewish writers. It rises rather from the insufficiency of the sources from which the student is expected to draw his information. Not that the materials are poorer than those for any other part of Europe. But they are unfortunately scattered over hundreds of volumes of Responsa, and buried as occasional remarks in numberless Halachic treatises, the study of which cannot reasonably be expected, whilst the information to be got from non-Jewish sources is mostly written in the Polish language, with which only a very few scholars are familiar.

The new book by Dembitzer, as far at least as Hebrew sources go, greatly contributes towards diminishing these difficulties, and bringing the necessary materials within the reach of the historian. The learned author, who is *Rabbinats-Assessor* in Cracow, has already acquired the fame of being one of the greatest Halachists by his commentary *Liviat Chai* on the *Ravia*. We are glad to see that Dembitzer, in his studies of Halachic books, did not confine himself to the strictly legal contents, but also paid sufficient attention to the historical and biographical materials that are scattered through them. Of this his present book gives excellent proof.

Though the main body of the book is dedicated to the history of the Chief Rabbis in Lemberg, which the author treats in twenty-one sketches, the student will find in it many other interesting points relating not only to the Jews in Poland, but also in other parts of Europe. Thus the notes to pp. 93-96 furnish most valuable information about the Rabbis of this country. In another place (p. 96 *sq.*) Dembitzer gives a complete list of the Ashkenazic Rabbis in Amsterdam until the year 1710. The introduction again contains, among other important points relating to the Rabbis of Cracow, an excellent biography of R. Moses Isserles the well-known Annotator of the Shulchan Aruch. It is at this place that Dembitzer tries to make us acquainted with the history of this code, which has in the course of time obtained such a high authority. We see there that R. Salomon Loria, the contemporary of R. Joseph Caro, and R. Moses Isserles protested both against the authority of the compiler of the Shulchan Aruch as well as that of his Annotator. But what is more surprising is that even R. Mordechai Yafeh, who was a pupil of Isserles, compiled a new code (the *לבוש*), in which he decided, in many cases, against the Shulchan Aruch. R. Moses of Lublin again (usually known as Maharam) paid little heed to the Shulchan Aruch, or to the Lebush, and decided against both. On a certain occasion he answers a student: “With regard to other proofs from the Shulchan Aruch and the Lebush, I have no occasion to spend many words (in refuting them), since it is not my way to base a decision on such works. They contain only the headings to the chapters (ראשי פרקים) which cannot be understood (without going back to the sources), and many stumble by them” (p. 12). On the other hand, however, we see that many Rabbis accepted the Shulchan Aruch as the last and unquestionable authority, “to deviate from which would mean to deviate from life” (p. 15). And the disciple

of the Maharam thinks that no man is justified in deciding against the Shulchan Aruch (*ibid.*). Surely R. Joshua, of Cracow, the author of the מגילת שלמה, was of the opposite opinion when he declared that opinions must not be suppressed on account of authorities in religious matters, and that every scholar has to act according to his own conviction of the merits of the case in question (p. 14). But this R. Joshua belonged to the minority. The majority of the Rabbis did not follow him, and maintained that since the appearance of this code there remained nothing for them but to follow its words.*

These specimens will suffice to show how many interesting points are scattered over Dembitzer's book. It is true that long digressions and excursions into other parts of Europe, such as Dembitzer makes, are not compatible with the order and systematic treatment required in a historical work. And we strongly advise the author to affix to the second volume a complete index of the localities and names mentioned in his book, otherwise its utility will be considerably lessened. We also think that the long digressions about R. Jonathan Eibeschütz (pp. 120-126) could have been left out without any loss to the book. The history of R. Jonathan is an unpleasant episode in the history of Jewish great men. The mass of evidence put forward by Graetz against R. Jonathan is too strong to be ignored or wholly attributed to the jealousy of his adversaries. However, we must not complain too much. For these rather disturbing digressions are mostly owing to the fact that the celebrities who form the subjects of Dembitzer's work were men by whose activity the whole of Judaism was benefited. They were appealed to and sought after by the Jews in all parts of Europe. Thus R. Zebi Ashkenazi held the office of Chief Rabbi successively in Sera-Bosna, Hamburg, Amsterdam, and Lemberg (p. 91); R. Joshua, the author of the פני יהושע, held the same office in Lisco, Lemberg, Berlin, Metz, and Frankfort-on-the-Main (p. 108); while R. Aryeh Leb was Rabbi in Resha, Hague, Lemberg, and Amsterdam (p. 131). We cannot, therefore, wonder if Dembitzer, in following up the careers of such men, had occasionally to leave Poland for a while and take a view of the communal circumstances amid which his heroes spent a certain part of their lives.

As to the history of the Jews in Poland, the student will find in Dembitzer's book that an unsurpassed self-sacrificing devotion to the study of the Law formed the main feature of their spiritual life. R. Nathau, of Hanover, the author of the יון מצולה, states in this book that there was no Jewish house in Poland which did not offer a shelter to at least one scholar. If it was not a member of the family they considered it as their duty to invite some student to live with them. Thus Lemberg alone could show during the three centuries which preceded ours a larger number of great Rabbinical scholars than London, Vienna, and Berlin put together (see p. 17). This was the case, too, with other large Jewish communities in Northern countries, as for instance Wilna,

* Dembitzer, in accordance with the design of his book, could not treat the question fully. More information would be rendered by a thorough study of the different commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch. The many attempts made towards codifying the law after the 16th century have also to be regarded. Of modern authors who have touched the question, see among others Graetz, vol. ix., p. 321 and 331; Cassel's Joseph Caro, p. 7, 8 and 12; Brüll's Jahrbuch, vol. ix., p. 151; M. Strashon in the appendices to the קריית נאמנה, pp. 330 and 331; and lastly, D. Hoffmann's excellent work, *Der Schulchan Aruch*, pp. 30-36.

Brisk, and Cracow. In this town even the butchers were learned men, and were appealed to in questions of *Shechitah* (p. 4). It was also Cracow whither R. Manasseh ben Israel sent his son with the purpose of studying, so famous were its Talmudical colleges. Now the highest ambition a man could aspire to was to become Chief Rabbi (אב בית דין). But this title was only conferred on those who distinguished themselves as recognised teachers in those colleges. If it happened that there were two men in the community who possessed great merits as regarded public teaching, the title was given to both (p. 6).

This devotion to study by no means ceased after the great persecutions to which we have already alluded. It was only interrupted for a certain time, but as soon as the communities recovered a little the colleges were restored, and the study was resumed with fresh vigour. Indeed the activity of the great Rabbis and teachers with whom Dembitzer's book deals, for the most part fills the period after the catastrophe of 1648. It will suffice to allude here to R. David Segal, whose book, *Ture Zahav*, acquired almost as much authority as the *Shulchan Aruch* (see pp. 48—77), and the already mentioned R. Zebi Ashkenazi, whose fame was so great that the London Portuguese community called him to be the umpire in the struggle against their Chacham R. David Nietto.

And now a few words with regard to the merits of this attachment to study. We are far from maintaining that this study was always conducted on the right lines. We know that many of the Polish Rabbis were devoted to the Pilpulistic or casuistic method, which led to many aberrations. But the Pilpul was not a special Polish disease. The whole of the Jewish world was infected by it. The German method termed Nuremberger, or Regensberger, and that prevailing among the Sephardim, as we know it from the *פרשת דרכים* and similar books, were not a whit more scientific than the Polish *Chiluk*, they were only less original and ingenious than the latter. On the other hand it seems that the alternative of that period did not lie between the casuistic and the critical method, but between knowledge of some kind and utter ignorance. We do not hesitate for a moment to say that we prefer the former. "Ignorance begetteth nothing," while intelligence in the end always turns out to be a power for good. To take an example of secular learning, we shall only remind our readers of the fact that it was those countries in which the loudest scholastic discussions were heard which also produced the great modern thinkers who broke the charm of scholasticism. So also Polish Rabbis were among the first to protest against the Pilpul. We shall only mention here R. Samuel Edles, who denounced it in the strongest terms. And in due time this fallacious method was almost entirely abandoned owing to the efforts of the Gaon R. Elijah Wilna. That the Poles Krochmal and Rapoport belonged to the chief founders of the modern historic school is a well-known fact, and as such recognised by our greatest writers on the subject. (See Graetz, xi. 482 sq.)

This point might be further developed; but we think it better to postpone the discussion until the appearance of the second volume, in which our author promises to deal with the history of the "Four Provinces." We hope that this important contribution will not be long delayed.

S. SCHECHTER.